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SC No. 11269/65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
17 October 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Possible Change in Chinese Communist Military Posture Vis-a-vis Vietnam

1. Several developments in recent weeks raise the possiblity of increased Chinese concern over US military action in North Vietnam and a possible change in their overall military posture in this area. The developments involve US airstrikes in northeastern North Vietnam nearer the Chinese Communist border, including a strike against a North Vietnamese SAM site near Kep Ha, the positioning of an additional regiment of Chinese Communist jet fighters on Hainan Island

2. On 16 October, the Chinese moved a regiment of jet fighters from a north China base to Hainan Island. In the past, the Chinese have periodically rotated the units based on Hainan. It is too early to tell whether the current deployment is merely a rotation or an effort to bolster their air defense capability in this area. In view of the current pattern of airstrikes which have been hitting targets in northeastern North Vietnam nearer the Chinese border, it is possible that the Chinese feel it prudent to strengthen their air defenses in the Tonkin Gulf area. They may have reasoned that the US may be planning to attack targets in China. On 5 October,

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US aircraft were operating close to and possibly over Chinese territory in the border area. Their propaganda has indicated that they will strike back if US aircraft intrude over Chinese territory.

3.

Chinese military units believed to be associated with logistics and supply began to appear in North Vietnam in mid-June and for the most part they remain located in the northeastern part of the country. The location of Chinese units in the southern part of the country could be connected with road and bridge repair or possibly airfield construction. We have noted that the North Vietnamese are having difficulties with their work gangs in this area.

4. The strike on 16 October against a North Vietnamese SAM site located near Kep Ha in northeastern North Vietnam may also have heightened Peking's sensitivities. Although we have not as yet been able to detect any basic change in Peking's position and there continue to be no indications of preparations to move large military forces into North Vietnam, we believe that continuing US airstrikes in northeastern North Vietnam near the Chinese border will continue to create a certain degree of uneasiness in Peking and that therefore the possibility of a change in Peking's attitude is possible. This may be reflected in future Chinese military moves.

5. For the reasons cited above, a continuing examination on a priority basis of Chinese military developments is necessary and will be carried out.

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